DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 031 763 CG 004 338

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Can You Brainwash for Democracy?
American Personnel and Guidance Association, Washington, D.C.
Pub Date 69
Note-9p.; Paper was presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 30-April 3, 1969.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
Descriptors-*Behavioral Sciences, Behavior Standards, Change Agents, Changing Attitudes, *Counselor Role, Group Counseling, *Group Relations, *Participation, Social Influences, *Symposia

This talk, presented at a symposium sets forth the concepts which the author believes provide the basis for deciding appropriate behavior in group settings. He also considers the functioning of the counselor in a social context, since traditional concepts of agency policy and the role of the counselor as a change agent now are undergoing rapid change. He feels that: (1) regardless of the worthiness of the goal, the means is still important, (2) social change cannot be brought about in a vacuum, (3) legitimate and workable alternatives to disruption must be provided, (4) society must work together rather than become polarized by extremist agitation, and (5) people have a right to dignity within a society which recognizes their individual differences. The author goes on to discuss those areas where he feels the profession should direct its attention as it seeks to improve the counselor's role in society. As behavioral scientists, counselors have a moral responsibility to evaluate the ways in which their activities affect society. They must ask from whom they derive their authority and to whom should they be accountable. (CJ)

ED031763

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

CG 004338

APGA Convention
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1969

SYMPOSIUM - CURRENT PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS
AND SOCIETAL INFLUENCES AFFECTING GROUP COUNSELING

Can You Brainwash for Democracy?

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The social revolution now in progress cannot be divorced from considerations of the role of the group leader in a democratic society. The increasing militance of minority groups using group pressure can either lead us toward a more effective democratic society or it can lead us into the formation of divisive cliques. The ultimate criterion, if we are concerned about preserving a democratic society, ought to be to discover if the group process is designed to produce conformity or is a means for evolving new group goals while allowing for individual difference. We also have hang-ups about whether groups should be task or people-oriented.

Unfortunately, most personnel and guidance people are like the proverbial lambs who have gone astray. If you seek answers to what are appropriate goals in counseling, confusion results. Counselors seem to be going through their adolescent identity crisis. They have not as yet begun to examine if their behavior is consistent with the goals they profess.

Recently I was asked to try to state the concepts which I felt provided the basis for deciding what was appropriate behavior for me in group settings.

My ideas seem to boil down to a few things I hold dear.

1. No matter how worthy the goal, we better pay attention to the means used to reach that goal. There are still too many people who believe that the process used to reach their goal is not important.

You cannot brainwash for democracy; neither can you correct injustices by depriving others of their rights.

2. Although there is much in our society that needs changing, the solution is not found in creating a vacuum. It is not enough to be against something; you must replace it with new guidelines with their associated rules and regulations. No matter how much the adolescent yells about the meaninglessness of adult rules, he makes equal noise when he feels his parents have let him down by not preventing him from getting into difficulties they could foresee. We do not help people learn to accept responsibility if we accept the authority of new forces without holding them accountable for the results of their actions. At the same time it is easy for "the establishment" to assume it knows what is good for others.

I have a story which helps me put this idea into perspective. You are out in the woods with your children. You come upon a tree made for climbing and your youngsters quickly start up through the branches. How high will you let them climb? The answer is quickly apparent - as high as you can stand it, not necessarily as high as they could safely manage.

No one can learn about his potential unless he tries to the point of failure.

How much do we set rules and regulations to make ourselves comfortable rather than to help others learn how to stretch their wings?

3. If we are going to complain about tactics used to call society's attention to injustices, we better be sure we provide legitimate and workable alternatives to disruptive tactics, and not just strong-arm methods to prevent their use. Even if it hurts, we better

recognize that most of the tactics we do not like were learned from us in the first place.

Have you ever been in a supermarket and watched a child beg his mother for candy or a breakfast food plugged by his favorite TV actor? After some whining and crying, some mothers give in to avoid the embarrassment and discomfort of the scene the child is creating. Yet they are surprised when he uses the same successful tactics on their next trip to the store. If riots work and dialogue does not, which would you try? We need to take a hard look at which techniques we reward and which we discourage by our response.

4. Each one of us makes many mistakes which we wish had not happened. All want to undo the injustices inflicted on others; but when after we try to correct our mistakes we continue to feel guilty, we can neither help ourselves nor the people with whom we share this earth. Eldridge Cleaver would like us to feel guilty and responsible for the sins of our forebears. For many the weight of this guilt is causing them to agree to all demands. The trouble is that the wider the pendulum swings, the greater the reaction. Our goal must be "to swing together" rather than try to build counter forces which, in turn, must be neutralized. This is as true for black-white relations as it is for the relationship of the ABM to a treaty on nuclear disarmament.

5. Let's face it; this is a hostile world. People need to find security somewhere. Many feel that security should come from religion. Others feel it can come only by people holding something in common banding together. It's funny that after hundreds of years of war caused by nationalism and the awful experience of genocide, as exemplified by one country which tried to define the "true Aryan," we still think

security can be achieved through racial or national ties. Black groups today seek a sense of worth through emphasis on common characteristics; but the more they seek to enforce conformity, the fewer people fit the desired image. Group solidarity, then, appears to be built on sand. The upward mobile black, the one who tries to communicate with other groups is cursed as an "Uncle Tom." Like many other minority groups before them, a segment in the black community finds a convenient escape-hatch from a competitive society by seeing discrimination even where it does not exist. The evils of discrimination these days are being matched by the actions of opportunists who see self-imposed segregation as ensuring their power base. People have a right to feel proud of themselves. They have a right to dignity. They also need to recognize that the differences which make us unique individuals are also the characteristics which make us dependent upon one another.

It is one thing to be able to cite your beliefs; it is quite another to be sure that your actions reflect your value system.

It is easy for behavioral scientists to feel and be popular these days. I know my colleagues in Pupil Personnel Services in the Rochester City School System are. Recently, however, we've begun to wonder about our popularity. It seems as if for many people we have been endowed with magical powers - those attributed to the head shrinker. We are seen as the ones who can be used to convert "others" to the faith. The problem, of course, is that each power group has its concept of the ideas we are supposed to be imposing on others.

Like the Indian Shaman, the magical power attributed to sensitivity training, confrontation techniques, operant conditioning, have

made many drunk with power. Few these days are stopping to ask about the relationship between the process they are employing and the product they wish to produce.

It is worth while to look around and see the world in which we currently function. This look is mandated by the fact that it is no longer possible to function in our agencies as if they were in a vacuum.

The advent of the Poverty Program and subsequent federal programs in the area of education, incorporating the concept of maximum feasible participation of the clients of an agency, has had a very real effect upon many programs in educational institutions. There is a growing acceptance of the concept that clients of an agency have the right in determining the policy and procedures used by the agency set up by society to serve them. With the increased participation of the grass roots, understanding the dynamics of subgroup pressures, control of divisive behaviors, and the effective use of catharsis in group settings become needed skills for the group leaders. With increasing rapidity society is recognizing that working with groups of people has much to recommend it besides economy of effort. There is a growing recognition that peer group involvement provides a quality of relationship which enhances learning over and above that provided in a one-to-one situation.

All of the methods in counseling really can be described by one term, "blocks to learning," a term which has two meanings. "Blocks to learning" suggests a concern for providing those building blocks or initial experiences which are needed by individuals for them to be able to profit from subsequent educational experiences. The other meaning

of "block" is to inhibit. Here counselors are concerned with helping individuals discover and remove those factors in their background or in society which inhibit their ability to profit from the setting. If we are to employ these two meanings of "blocks to learning," it is possible to examine methods in guidance and counseling, regardless of the level or setting involved, in terms of the variety of ways in which they typically are employed.

Reality Testing and Skill Development. As the philosophy of the counseling movement has shifted from a concern over providing insights for clients, as the basis for motivating their behavior, toward symptom removal as a way of facilitating adjustment, there has been a rapid growth of group techniques designed to present to clients the kinds of feedback about their behavior and adjustment which might most rapidly facilitate modification of their behavior in a desired direction. Terms like "reality therapy," "confrontation techniques," "T-groups," and "sensitivity training," are representative of approaches that have been developed, designed to help individuals in a group setting receive from their peers an honest feedback as to the way in which their behavior and communications are perceived and accepted by their colleagues. Given the help to compare their own perception of their behavior with the perceptions of others of their behavior, it becomes possible for an individual to explore alternate ways of functioning which will cause peers to perceive him in a desired manner. Along with increased acceptance of behavior modification techniques there has been an inadequate amount of attention paid to the quality of the group environment needed to provide the security required by individuals in a group before they are able to permit themselves to

face the meaning of their own behavior and to consider try-out experiences in the group setting which will permit them to develop new skills to replace those which they now find they need to discard. Counselors in training soon discover that while it is difficult to accurately perceive the meaning of the communication they get from their clients, it is many times more difficult to function as the catalytic agent in a group, since the functioning of the group operates on a multiplicity of levels. Peers may identify with individuals who are expressing problems and may incorporate insights that they never express verbally in the group setting. The needed skill of the group leader, therefore, demands an awareness not only of the meaning of an individual's behavior in a group setting, but also of the total group dynamic which is a function of the interrelationships between individuals as they try to solve problems together.

Schools as an Institution Undergoing Social Change. The schools provide one example of the changing role of the counselor. There is a growing awareness that to be truly successful in modifying the educational climate of the school or of society, as a means of helping students learn more effectively, it is necessary that members of the pupil personnel team, and counselors in particular, direct their attention and their skills to the other significant members of the educational community. Accordingly, counselors now find themselves actively involved in working with groups of teachers, groups of parents, or with community agencies, and employing many of the techniques described to help each of these groups clarify the way in which they can best assist in the cooperative objective of improving the quality of education in the educational setting.

Thus far in this paper I have tried to focus on the ways in which the philosophy and values of the counselor affect the way he functions and the way he evaluates his effectiveness. I have also tried to consider the functioning of the counselor in a social context, since traditional concepts of agency policy and the role of the counselor as a change agent now are undergoing rapid change.

With these ideas as background, I would like to set forth areas where the profession needs to direct its attention as it seeks to improve the role of the counselor in our society.

There is a need for counselors concerned with group process to pay attention to the confusion found in current practices:

- The tendency to equate passiveness on the part of the leader with permissiveness, along with the lack of recognition that "to permit" implies the existence of limits.

- The need to deal with anxiety created in counselors when they equate group process with "treatment." Implied is the concept of pathology and the prohibition against helping "normal" people prevent problems from being formed. Who should be our clients?

- The need to reconcile existential concepts of reality with the current popularity of using confrontation techniques. Are we reaching a point where we accept as reality any concept presented aggressively by a vocal minority?

- The need for tools available to the group leader to assist him in facilitating the growth of non-professionals used in group settings.

- The need to raise questions as to the "dehumanizing" effects of professional training. If effectiveness is related to being open and real, to what degree can an uninvolved group member really serve as leader? Why do many untrained para-professionals seem to have success in freeing others to communicate on important topics at a deep-feeling level?

It is high time that we recognize that as behavioral scientists we have a moral responsibility to evaluate the ways in which our activities affect society. Just as the nuclear physicist can't evade responsibility for his role in developing an ABM system, with its associated philosophy that security is based upon the potential for massive retaliation, so too we need to examine the implications for our society when counselors employ such techniques as confrontation or operant conditioning to manipulate the behavior of others.

The ultimate question seems to be: From whom do counselors derive their authority and to whom should they be held accountable?

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